

University of Massachusetts Lowell

Master of Public Administration

Program description

The program builds on the strengths and faculty competencies in the College and other divisions of the University and responds to regional workforce demands in three core areas - **justice administration, public humanities and arts, and human services**. The program aims to fulfill the following broad purposes/objectives:

- Responding to market demands for skilled professionals prepared to meet the challenges of managing public and non-profit agencies;
- Expanding career development pathways for UMass Lowell undergraduate students, particularly those pursuing bachelor's degrees within the College of Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences;
- Providing skill development and advancement opportunities for professionals currently working in the public and non-profit sectors, particularly within the Merrimack Valley region.

In pursuit of these general objectives, the program will build upon curricular synergies with other existing graduate degree programs within the College and across the University.

As an applied graduate degree program, the curriculum will emphasize the development of real world skills and experience, and will prepare students to assume supervisory, managerial, and leadership roles within both the public and nonprofit sectors. Although the curricular emphasis will vary based on the options and student-specific career objectives, core areas of skill development will include organizational leadership, strategic management and planning, budgeting and finance, program development and evaluation, and working with data.

Each option is designed to address a particular sector of the labor market. The **justice administration** option will prepare students for careers in court administration, correctional systems (both community and institutional), law enforcement agencies, community-based agencies serving justice-involved populations, and policy research organizations focused on justice-related issues. The **public humanities and the arts** option will prepare students for management careers within cultural institutions, including those related to visual arts, theater, music, museums, and historic preservation. The **human services** option will prepare students to assume managerial roles in public and nonprofit organizations that are focused on addressing the social, health, and mental health needs of a range of populations, with a particular focus on immigrant communities, the elderly, and the underserved.

Curriculum

The curriculum is designed to provide students who are planning careers in the designated areas (justice administration, public humanities and the arts, and human services) with a toolbox of organizational and fiscal management skills, an applied understanding of government and the public sector, and practical experience in identifying, analyzing, and responding to challenges and opportunities presented within their chosen sector.

Curricular Elements

The 39-credit curriculum consists of three major elements:

- 1) A **15-credit standard core** that all students will take;
- 2) A **6-credit flexible core**, in which students will choose two courses aimed at enhancing their skill sets; and
- 3) An **18-credit course sequence** distinct to the student's selected option.

Standard Core (15 credits)

The standard core will provide all students enrolling in the program with a baseline set of skills and competencies related to managing within public and nonprofit organizations. This includes foundational courses in public administration (3 credits, taken at the outset of the program); public & non-profit budgeting and financial management (a 2-credit course covering the basics of accounting, plus a 3-credit course covering a broader range of budgeting and financial management issues); public and non-profit management and leadership (3-credits); and data analysis (3 credits). Students will have an opportunity to expand upon these foundations both within the flexible core and within specialized courses situated within the options. For full-time students, these courses are designed for completion over the first two semesters of the program.

Beyond this standard course load, students will enroll in a 1-credit professional practicum, tied to the program's field work requirement. Students will be required to complete a minimum of 100 internship hours (paid or unpaid), and will utilize this practicum to engage in active facilitated reflection on their work experiences. Those currently working within the field will be eligible to apply for a waiver of the internship requirement, but all students will be required to participate in the professional practicum.

Flexible Core (6 credits)

The flexible core will offer students both complementary baseline skills relevant to their career goals as well as advanced skills that build upon the foundations established within the standard core curriculum. The current proposal calls for five courses to be offered, of which students must successfully complete at least two. These five courses include grant writing and program development, program evaluation, public policy analysis, advanced data analysis, and managing workplace diversity. Beyond the two required courses, additional courses from this list may be taken as electives consistent with the requirements of students' selected option. The flexible core may generally be taken at any time during the program, contingent on student completion of prerequisites.

Option-based Course Sequence (18 credits)

The option-based course sequence is designed to provide students with the breadth and depth of skills and knowledge relevant to their chosen sector. Each option sequence includes an option-specific management course and a capstone project designed to apply concepts from the core curriculum to the challenges faced

by organizations within that particular sector. The options also each include their own topical breadth and elective requirements. The elements of the option course sequences are briefly summarized in the section below and detailed in the “Curricular Appendix.”

Curricular Scheduling and Coordination

Delivery and scheduling of the core curriculum (both standard and flexible elements) will be managed by the MPA program director in consultation with department chairs and with the Associate Dean of the College. Core courses will be primarily delivered by faculty in the Department of Political Science and the Manning School of Business, with some courses delivered by faculty from other University units including the Department of Psychology, Department of Sociology, Department of Economics, School of Criminology and Justice Studies, and Graduate School of Education.

The option coordinators, in consultation with the MPA program director and relevant department chairs, will handle scheduling and management of the option-based course sequences. Common courses and capstone experiences will initially be offered on an annual basis, although it is anticipated that they may be expanded to a semester basis as enrollment grows. Electives will be scheduled on a rotating basis in accordance with course demand.

Sample course sequences for full-time students enrolled in each option for nine credits per semester are indicated in the tables below. Course offerings for part-time students will follow a similar general progression, albeit on a more extended timetable.

Justice Administration Sequence

Students enrolling in the justice administration option will be required to take a foundational course in the *Administration of Justice* (3 credits); at least one technical skill-based course (either *Criminal Justice Research Methods* or *Justice Information Systems*); one justice management course (3 credits); two electives (6 credits); and a *capstone experience* (3 credits). The electives may be selected from designated graduate courses within the School of Criminology & Justice studies, including courses focused on the courts, corrections, policing, criminal justice technology and information systems, community justice, alternative dispute resolution, and others. A sample full time schedule is noted below.

Semester	Core Sequence	Option Sequence
Year 1 (Fall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Administration Data Analysis Financial Accounting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration of Justice
Year 1 (Spring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgeting and Financial Management Public Management and Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criminal Justice Research Methods or Justice Information systems
Year 2 (Fall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible Core (Option #1) Professional Practicum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing Justice Organizations or Administration of the Courts Option Elective #1
Year 2 (Spring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible Core (Option #2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option Elective #2 Capstone experience

Public Humanities and the Arts Sequence

The curricular sequence for students enrolling in the public humanities and the arts option contains two required courses (6 credits), three targeted electives (9 credits), and a capstone experience. At the program outset, students will enroll in ***Arts and Humanities in the Community***, a survey course designed to establish a common conceptual framework. In the second year, students will enroll in ***Arts Administration and Marketing***, in which students will apply the skills gained within the core to the arts and cultural sector. In their final semester, students will enroll in a team-based **capstone experience** that will include a curation project, a community writing project, or a digital humanities project on behalf of a cultural organization. Beyond these courses, students will have the opportunity to take three option-based electives, which are expected to include offerings related to digital humanities, public art, literary tourism, community music, and museum curation. A sample full time schedule is noted below.

Semester	Core Sequence	Option Sequence
Year 1 (Fall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Public AdministrationData AnalysisFinancial Accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Arts and Humanities in the Community
Year 1 (Spring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Budgeting and Financial ManagementPublic Management and Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Option Elective #1
Year 2 (Fall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Flexible Core (Option #1)Professional Practicum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Arts Administration and MarketingOption Elective #2
Year 2 (Spring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Flexible Core (Option #2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Option Elective #3Capstone Experience

Human Services Sequence

The curricular sequence for students enrolling in the human services option contains two required courses (6 credits), three electives (9 credits), and the capstone (3 credits). At the program outset, students will enroll in ***Social Policy and Inequalities*** – a survey course designed to establish a common conceptual framework for students enrolling in the option. Following completion of the core program sequence, students will enroll in ***Human Services Administration***, in which students will apply the skills gained within the core to the human services sector. This course will be followed by the team-based **capstone experience** – an opportunity to substantively engage with an area human service organization to complete an analytic project. For their electives, students will have the opportunity to explore a range of specialized areas, including immigrant communities, mental health, aging, health policy, and refugee and asylum policy. Electives will include courses that will be cross-listed with other FAHSS graduate programs (particularly community & social psychology) and with courses offered within the College of Health Sciences. A sample full time schedule is noted below.

Semester	Core Sequence	Option Sequence
Year 1 (Fall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Administration Data Analysis Financial Accounting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Policy and Inequalities
Year 1 (Spring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgeting and Financial Management Public Management and Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option Elective #1
Year 2 (Fall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible Core (Workplace Diversity)* Professional Practicum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Services Administration Option Elective #2
Year 2 (Spring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible Core (Option #2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option Elective #3 Capstone Experience

**NOTE: For this option, Workplace Diversity is required as one of the flexible core courses. Students may choose their second course from the other flexible core options. Students may also choose an additional Flexible Core course as one of the Option Electives.*

Student Admission

Admission to the program will be open to students with an earned baccalaureate degree or its U.S. equivalent from an accredited college or university. Students with such degrees in any field and discipline will be eligible to apply. Admission will also be contingent on a satisfactory score on the GRE standardized test. The GRE requirement may be waived for UMass Lowell alumni who have graduated in the past five years with a GPA of 3.0 or greater. Current undergraduate UMass Lowell students in any field of study with a GPA of 3.0 or greater may apply to the accelerated master's program (aka "Bachelor's to Master's") during their junior or senior year, and will be permitted to apply up to 12 graduate-level credits earned as an undergraduate to their MPA degree.

It is anticipated that new students matriculating in the program on a full-time basis will complete the degree requirements in four semesters (two academic years), and that students in the Bachelor's to Master's track will typically require three semesters following completion of their bachelor's degree. Although rates of degree progress and completion for part-time students will vary, the enrollment forecast assumes that part time students will, on average, complete their degrees within eight semesters (four academic years). As the curriculum of the program is designed to be consistent with accreditation standards, it is expected that credits would be transferable to other similarly designed programs.